BEFORE

THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF

SOUTH CAROLINA

DOCKET NO. 2019-7-G - ORDER NO. 2019-730

OCTOBER 15, 2019

IN RE:	Application of Piedmont Natural Gas)	INITIAL ORDER
	Company, Incorporated to Have the Terms of)	APPROVING
	the Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act Apply)	QUARTERLY
	to the Company's Rates and Charges for Gas)	MONITORING REPORT
	Distribution Services)	AND ADOPTING
)	SETTLEMENT
)	AGREEMENT

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the "Commission") pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §§ 58-5-400 *et seq.*, the Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act ("Act"), as related to Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. ("Piedmont" or the "Company"). Order No. 2005-491 established a baseline return on equity for the Company under the Act, based on the Company's last rate case. *See* Order No. 2002-761. Section 58-5-455 sets out a procedure for the handling of monitoring reports under the Act related to the quarter ending March 31, which we detailed in Order No. 2005-491 at page 5.

Under Section 58-5-455, the Company files the monitoring report with the Commission and the Office of Regulatory Staff ("ORS"). Interested parties may comment on the report. Where it appears to the Commission or ORS that an adjustment in rates may be warranted, ORS shall conduct an audit of the monitoring report and specify any changes that it determines are necessary to correct errors in the report or to otherwise bring the report into compliance with the statute. Parties may comment on the ORS audit. On or

before October 15, the Commission shall issue an initial order setting forth any changes required in the utility's request to adjust rates under the statute. Any gas rate adjustments authorized under the terms of the statute shall take effect for all bills rendered on or after the first billing cycle of November of that year. This present Order is the "initial order" contemplated by S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-5-455 for Piedmont.

Pursuant to the South Carolina Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act, Piedmont submitted its quarterly monitoring report for the twelve-month period ending March 31, 2019, as well as the required revenue calculations and any proposed changes to its tariff rates necessary to permit Piedmont the opportunity to earn the rate of return on common equity established in its last general rate case as specified in Section 58-5-420(1).

The ORS conducted a review of Piedmont's Monitoring Report for the twelve-month period ending March 31, 2019, to evaluate compliance with Section 58-5-430 and Section 58-5-440 of the Act. The ORS proposed certain adjustments to reported amounts to bring the report into conformance with those sections. Piedmont filed written comments advising the Commission that Piedmont had no objection to or comments on the findings and adjustments reflected in the ORS Audit Report.

A Settlement Agreement was reached by and among Piedmont and ORS (collectively, the Parties). Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, attached hereto as Order Exhibit 1, Piedmont will implement rates for the twelve-month period beginning with the first billing cycle of November 2019, calculated on the basis of a 9.9% return on equity ("ROE"), instead of the 12.6% ROE approved by Commission Order Nos. 2002-761, 2005-491, and 2005-567. The Parties agree that Piedmont will adopt the accounting

adjustments of ORS as set forth in Schedule 2 attached to the Settlement Agreement. The Parties further agree that, based upon the accounting adjustments proposed by ORS and adopted by Piedmont, and the agreement of Piedmont to implement rates based upon a 9.9% ROE, South Carolina ratepayers will realize an increase in current margin rates totaling \$6,102,317. The Settlement Agreement states that this equates to a reduction of \$(6,845,620) for South Carolina ratepayers when compared to rates calculated on Piedmont's authorized 12.6% ROE, which was authorized by Commission Order Nos. 2002-761, 2005-491, and 2005-567. The Parties further agree to an increase in demand cost of \$4,024,949 due to a demand cost over-recovery. We have examined the accounting and pro forma adjustments proposed and agreed upon by the Parties, as well as the Settlement Agreement, and we take no exception to them.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1. S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-5-455, a portion of the Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act, requires the filing of certain documents and the issuance of this Initial Order.
 - 2. Changes are required to the Company's request to adjust rates.
- 3. ORS has suggested certain changes to which Piedmont does not object, as outlined above. Indeed, the Parties have reached a Settlement Agreement.
- 4. This Commission has found no other changes appropriate or necessary other than those agreed to by the Parties.
- 5. The Settlement Agreement is approved. This Commission adopts the changes and adjustments proposed by the Parties and the resulting rates and charges.

- 6. The new approved rates and charges shall be effective for bills rendered on and after the first billing cycle in November 2019, subject to changes under the Company's Gas Cost Recovery Mechanism.
- 7. If it has not already done so by the date of issuance of this Order, the Company shall file its revised tariff utilizing the Commission's e-filing system for tariffs prior to its first billing cycle in November 2019. The revised tariff should be electronically filed in a text searchable PDF format using the Commission's DMS System (https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Web). An additional copy should be sent via email to included etariff@psc.sc.gov to be in the Commission's ETariff (https://etariff.psc.sc.gov). Future revisions to the tariff should be made using the ETariff System. Each tariff sheet shall contain a reference to this Order and its effective date at the bottom of each page. The revised tariff shall be consistent with the findings of this Order and shall be consistent with the Commission's Rules and Regulations, as well as the provisions of the Settlement Agreement.
- 8. Piedmont shall provide a reconciliation of each tariff rate change approved as a result of this Order to each tariff rate revision filed in the ETariff system. Such reconciliation shall include an explanation of any differences and be submitted separately from the Company's ETariff system filing.
- 9. If it has not already done so by the date of issuance of this Order, the Company shall file a schedule showing the revenue produced by each and every tariffed rate approved by the Commission and reconcile the revenue produced, by tariffed rate, to the revenue requirement approved in this Order.

10. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

Comer H. Randall, Chairman

Justin 7. Williams, Vice Chairman

(SEAL

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

DOCKET NO. 2019-7-G

IN RE:	Application of Piedmont Natural Gas Company,)	
	Incorporated to Have the Terms of the Natural)	SETTLEMENT
	Gas Rate Stabilization Act Apply to the)	AGREEMENT
	Company's Rates and Charges for Gas)	
	Distribution Services)	

This Settlement Agreement is made by and among the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff ("ORS") and Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. ("Piedmont" or the "Company") (collectively referred to as the "Parties" or sometimes individually as a "Party").

WHEREAS, by Public Service Commission of South Carolina ("Commission") Order Nos. 2005-491 and 2005-567, dated September 28, 2005 and October 13, 2005, respectively, the Commission established a baseline for Piedmont under the Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act (the "RSA") and approved certain accounting adjustments proposed by ORS and PNG:

WHEREAS, pursuant to Sections 58-5-430 and 58-5-440 of the RSA, Piedmont filed its Quarterly Monitoring Report and Proposed Rate Changes with the Commission on June 14, 2019 for the review period consisting of April 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019 ("Review Period");

WHEREAS, the Report of ORS's examination of Piedmont's Monitoring Report for the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 pursuant to the RSA, was filed with the Commission on August 30, 2019;

WHEREAS, the Parties to this Settlement Agreement are the only parties of record in the above-captioned docket;

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WHEREAS, the Parties have engaged in discussions to determine if a settlement of this

proceeding would be in their best interest; and,

WHEREAS, following those discussions, the Parties have each determined that their

interests, and the public interest, would be best served by settling the above-captioned case under

the terms and conditions set forth below:

1. Piedmont will implement rates for the twelve-month period beginning with the first

billing cycle of November 2019 calculated on the basis of a 9.9% Return on Equity ("ROE")

instead of the 12.6% ROE approved by Commission Orders No. 2002-761, 2005-491, and 2005-

567.

2. The Parties agree that the following are the only attachments to this Settlement

Agreement: Settlement Schedule I (Net Operating Income and Rate of Return); Settlement

Schedule 2 (Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments); and Settlement Schedule 3

(Weighted Cost of Capital).

The Parties agree that Piedmont will adopt the accounting adjustments of ORS as 3.

set forth in Settlement Schedule 2 as attached to this Settlement Agreement.

4. The Parties agree that, based upon the accounting adjustments proposed by ORS

and adopted by Piedmont, a Debt/Equity Ratio of 44.65/55.35, and the agreement of Piedmont to

implement rates based on a 9.9% ROE, South Carolina ratepayers will realize an increase in current

margin rates totaling \$6,102,317. This equates to a reduction of \$6,845,620 for South Carolina

ratepayers when compared to rates calculated at the authorized 12.6% ROE.

5. The Parties agree to an increase in demand costs of \$4,024,949, due to a demand

cost under-recovery.

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6. The Parties agree that Piedmont will file a general rate case proceeding with the Commission no later than April 1, 2022.

- 7. The Parties agree that the ORS shall be provided the following information by the Company on a going forward basis:
 - a. Concurrent with the Company's future RSA report filings for the period ended March 31 of each year, Piedmont shall report to the ORS the employees whose incentive pay has been capitalized and included in rate base and the amount thereof.
 - b. Concurrent with the Company's future RSA report filings for the period ended March 31 of each year, Piedmont shall report to ORS all the per books non-allowable expenses for the annual review period.
 - c. By November 30 and May 31 of each year, Piedmont shall provide the ORS with general ledger expense detail for the respective six-month prior periods ending September 30 and March 31 for RSA non-allowable expense testing purposes.
 - d. The Company will work in good faith with ORS to improve the transparency and reporting of costs allocated to the Company from DEBS, or other subsidiaries of Duke Energy in order to facilitate the ORS's ability to efficiently audit such cost allocations in the future.
- 8. The Parties agree to cooperate in good faith with one another in recommending to the Commission that this Settlement Agreement be accepted and approved by the Commission as a fair, reasonable, and full resolution of the above-captioned proceeding. The Parties agree to use

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reasonable efforts to defend and support any Commission order issued approving this Settlement

Agreement and the terms and conditions contained herein.

9. The Parties agree that signing this Settlement Agreement (a) will not constrain,

inhibit, impair, or prejudice their arguments or positions held in future or collateral proceedings;

(b) will not constitute a precedent or evidence of acceptable practice in future proceedings; and (c)

will not limit the relief, rates, recovery, or rates of return that any Party may seek or advocate in

any future proceeding. The Parties agree that this Settlement Agreement is in public interest when

considered as a whole. If the Commission declines to approve this Settlement Agreement in its

entirety, then any Party may withdraw from the Settlement Agreement without penalty or

obligation.

10. The Parties represent that the terms of this Settlement Agreement are based upon

full and accurate information known as of the date this Settlement Agreement is executed. If, after

execution, either Party is made aware of information that conflicts, nullifies, or is otherwise

materially different than that information upon which this Settlement Agreement is based, either

Party may withdraw from the Settlement Agreement with written notice to the other Party.

11. This Settlement Agreement shall be interpreted according to South Carolina law.

12. Each Party acknowledges its consent and agreement to this Settlement Agreement

by authorizing its counsel to affix his or her signature to this document where indicated below.

Counsel's signature represents his or her representation that his or her client has authorized the

execution of the agreement. Facsimile signatures and email signatures shall be as effective as

original signatures to bind any Party. This document may be signed in counterparts, with the

various signature pages combined with the body of the document constituting an original and

provable copy of this Settlement Agreement.

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[PARTY SIGNATURES TO FOLLOW ON SEPARATE PAGES]

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Schedule I

Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Net Operating Income and Rate of Return For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

			(1) Per Regulatory Books	(2) ORS Accounting and Pro Formu Adjustments			(3) ORS As Adjusted	(4) Adjustments for Proposed Margin Increase	-	(5) Adjustments for Demand Cost Under(Over) Recovery	. 8	(6) Total After Proposed Rates
	Operating Revenues											
2	Sale and Transportation of Gas Other Operating Revenues	s	153,587,996 \$ 682,230	(6,969,147)	(1)	\$	146,618,849 S 682,230	6,102,317 0		4,024,949 0	(17) S	156,746,115 682,230
3	Total Operating Revenues		154,270,226	(6,969,147)			147,301,079	6,102,317		4,024,949		157,428.345
	Operating Expenses											
4	Cost of Gas		71,141,986	(5,751,500)	(2)		65.390,486	0		3,992,375	(18)	69,382,861
5	Operations and Maintenance		31,564,464	(734,294)	(3)		30,830,170	15,212	(12)	10,034	(19)	30.855,416
6	Depreciation		14,289,194	2,604,053	(4)		16.893,247	0		0		16,893,247
7	General Taxes		10,106,200	(2,173,631)	(5)		7,932,569	34.174	(13)	22,540	(20)	7.989,283
8	State Income Taxes		(757,855)	1,713,817	(6)		955,962	302,647	(14)	0		1,258,609
9	Federal Income Taxes		3,674,028	(797,497)	(7)		2,876,531	1,207,559	(15)	0		4,084,090
10	Amortization of Investment Tax Credits	-	(13,176)	0		1	(13,176)	0	2	0	- 6	(13.176)
ш	Total Operating Expenses	-	130,004,841	(5,139,052)			124,865,789	1,559,592	,	4,024,949		130,450.330
12	Net Operating Income		24,265,385	(1,830,095)			22,435,290	4,542,725		0		26,978.015
13	Interest on Customers' Deposits		(83.601)	0			(83,601)	0		0		(83,601)
14	Amortization of Debt Redemption Premium		0	0	(8)		0	0		0		0
15	Allowance for Funds Used During Construction		590,178	0			590,178	0		0		590,178
16	Customer Growth		177.137	(13,359)	(9)	17	163.778	33,162	(16)	0		196,940
17	Net Operating Income for Return	\$ _	24,949,099 S	(1,843,454)		\$	23,105,645 S	4,575,887	s	0	\$	27,681,532
	Rate Base:											
18	Plant in Service	S	662,331,272 \$	0		S	662,331,272				\$	662,331,272
19	Accumulated Depreciation	-	(243,204,108)	0		-	(243,204,108)					(243,204,108)
20	Net Plant in Service Add:		419,127,164	0			419,127,164					419,127,164
21	Construction Work in Progress		34.643.898	0			34,643,898					34,643,898
22	Materials and Supplies		6,861,533	0			6,861,533					6,861,533
23	Cash Working Capital		(847,675)	(91,787)	(10)	1	(939,462)					(939,462)
	Deduct:		(0.11,012)	(>1,101)	(10)		(,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,					(,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,
24	Customers' Advances		0	0			0					0
25	Customers' Deposits		2,796,421	0			2.796.421					2,796,421
26	Accumulated Deferred Income Taxes		91.042.968	0			91.042,968					91.042.968
27	Unclaimed Funds	-	144,338	0		-	144,338					144,338
28	Total Rate Base:	S	365,801,193 S	(91,787)		s _	365,709,406				S	365.709,406
29	Rate of Return		6.82%			; i,=	6.32%					7,57%
30	Return on Common Equity		8.55%				7.64%				9	9.90%

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Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

Line <u>No.</u>		<u>Description</u>	_	Per Piedmont	Per ORS
1		Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas			
		To adjust revenues to the going-level basis.	\$_	(6,969,147) \$	(6,969,147)
		Total Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas	\$	(6,969,147) \$	(6,969,147)
2		Cost of Gas			
		To adjust cost of gas to the going-level basis.	\$	(5,751,500) \$	(5,751,500)
		Total Cost of Gas	\$_	(5,751,500) \$	(5,751,500)
3		Operations and Maintenance Expenses			
	a.	To adjust payroll expense to the going-level basis.	\$	217,883 \$	217,883
	b.	To adjust pension and OPEB expenses to the going-level basis.		(212,260)	(212,260)
	c.	To adjust employee retirement and welfare benefit expenses to the going-level basis.		285,241	285,241
	d.	To decrease expenses for the provision for uncollectible accounts to reflect actual net write-offs over a three-year period.		(311,237)	(311,237)
	e.	To adjust expenses for allocations to non-utility activities.		(7,145)	(10,705)
	f.	To adjust LTI - equity incentives expenses to the going-level basis		98,814	0
	g.	To adjust STI - short term incentives expenses to the going-level basis.		282,531	0
	h.	To adjust lease expenses to the going-level basis.		(80,604)	(80,604)
	i.	To adjust expenses for the South Carolina assessment fee.		12,162	87,870
	j.	To adjust expenses for non-allowables for ratemaking purposes.		(579,214)	(630,046)
	k.	To adjust expenses for Gas Technology Institute (GTI) expense.		0	0
	l.	To adjust expenses for amortization of deferred SC environmental expense.		114,564	114,564
	m.	To adjust the Company's LTI & STI to remove amounts associated with stock performance and remove 50% of the Company's four highest compensated executives' base pay and benefits.		0	(195,000)
		Total Operations and Maintenance Expense	\$ _	(179,265) \$ _	(734,294)

Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

Line <u>No.</u>		<u>Description</u>	_	Per Piedmont	Per ORS
4		Depreciation Expense			
		To adjust depreciation expense to the going-level basis using the most current depreciation study rates.	\$_	2,604,053 \$	2,604,053
		Total Depreciation Expense	\$_	2,604,053 \$	2,604,053
5		General Taxes			
	a.	To adjust property taxes to the going-level basis.	\$	(2,306,307) \$	(2,306,307)
	b.	To adjust franchise taxes to the going-level basis.	\$	155,035 \$	155,035
	c.	To adjust payroll tax expense to the going-level basis.	\$	45,302 \$	16,668
	d.	To adjust the utility license fee (rate of .3%) to the going-level basis.	\$	(20,907) \$	(20,907)
	e.	To adjust the gross receipts tax (rate of .260010%) to the going level basis.	\$	(14,448) \$	(18,120)
		Total General Taxes	\$	(2,141,325) \$	(2,173,631)
6		State Income Taxes			
		To adjust state income taxes (rate of 5%) to reflect the impact on income for accounting and pro forma adjustments.	\$_	1,664,264 \$	1,713,817
		Total State Income Taxes	\$_	1,664,264 \$	1,713,817
7		Federal Income Taxes			
	a.	To adjust federal income taxes (rate of 21%) to reflect the impact on income for accounting and pro forma adjustments.		(995,215) \$	140,262
	b.	To decrease expenses for the 2017 tax reform EDIT giveback to customers.	\$_	\$	(937,759)
		Total Federal Income Taxes	\$_	(995,215) \$	(797,497)
8		Amortization of Debt Redemption Premium			
		To adjust net operating income for amortization of debt redemption premium.	\$_	0 \$	0
		Total Amortization of Debt Redemption Premium	\$_	0 \$	0
9		Customer Growth			
		To adjust net operating income to reflect anticipated customer growth (rate of .73%) following the adjustments to operating revenues and expenses.	\$	(15,842) \$	(13,359)
		Total Customer Growth Page 2 of 5	\$_	(15,842) \$	(13,359)

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Schedule 2

Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

Line Per Per
No. Description Piedmont ORS

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Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations

Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

Line <u>No.</u>	Description	_	Per Piedmont		Per ORS
10	Cash Working Capital				
	To adjust cash working capital following the pro forma adjustments to operation and maintenance expenses (rate of 12.5%).	\$_	(22,408)	\$	(91,787)
	Total Cash Working Capital	\$_	(22,408)	\$ _	(91,787)
11	Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas				
	To adjust revenues from the sale and transportation of gas for the proposed margin increase.	\$_	12,941,237	\$_	6,102,317
	Total Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas	\$_	12,941,237	\$ _	6,102,317
12	Operations and Maintenance Expenses				
	To adjust the provision for uncollectible accounts (.24929%) following the adjustment to operating revenues.	\$_	32,261	\$_	15,212
	Total Operations and Maintenance Expenses	\$_	32,261	\$ _	15,212
13	General Taxes				
	To adjust the utility license fee (rate of .3%) and gross receipts tax (rate of .260010%) following the adjustment to operating revenues.	\$_	65,651	\$_	34,174
	Total General Taxes	\$_	65,651	\$ _	34,174
14	State Income Taxes				
	To adjust state income taxes (rate of 5%) to reflect the impact on income from the adjustments to operating revenues and expenses.	\$_	642,166	\$_	302,647
	Total State Income Taxes	\$_	642,166	\$	302,647
15	Federal Income Taxes				
	To adjust federal income taxes (rate of 21%) to reflect the impact on income from the adjustments to operating revenues, expenses and state income taxes.	\$	2,562,243	\$	1,207,559
	Total Federal Income Taxes	\$	2,562,243	\$	1,207,559

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Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustments

Explanations of Accounting and Pro Forma Adjustment For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

Line <u>No.</u>	<u>Description</u>		Per Piedmont		Per ORS
16	Customer Growth				
	To adjust net operating income to reflect anticipated customer growth (rate of .73%) following the adjustments to operating revenues and expenses.	\$_	70,364	\$_	33,162
	Total Customer Growth	\$ _	70,364	\$ _	33,162
17	Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas				
	To adjust the revenue requirement for the sale and transportation of gas associated with demand cost recovery.	\$_	4,022,811	\$_	4,024,949
	Total Operating Revenues - Sale and Transportation of Gas	\$ _	4,022,811	\$ _	4,024,949
18	Cost of Gas				
	To adjust cost of gas for the demand cost recovery.	\$_	3,992,375	\$ <u>_</u>	3,992,375
	Total Cost of Gas	\$ =	3,992,375	\$ _	3,992,375
19	Operations and Maintenance Expenses				
	To adjust the provision for uncollectible accounts (rate of .24929%) following the adjustment to operating revenues.	\$_	10,028	\$_	10,034
	Total Operations and Maintenance Expenses	\$ =	10,028	\$ _	10,034
20	General Taxes				
	To adjust the utility license fee (rate of .3%) and gross receipts tax (rate of .260010%) for the adjustment to revenue for demand cost recovery.	\$_	20,408	\$_	22,540
	Total General Taxes	\$_	20,408	\$ <u></u>	22,540

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Schedule 3

Piedmont Natural Gas Company South Carolina Operations Weighted Cost of Capital For the Twelve-Month Period Ended March 31, 2019 Docket No. 2019-7-G

				Regulatory	Per Books			ORS As a	Adjusted		After Proposed Rates					
	Capital		Rate	Embedded	Overall	Income For	Rate	Embedded	Overall	Income For	Rate	Embedded	Overall	Income For		
Description	Structure	Ratio	Base	Cost/Return	Cost/Return	Return	Base	Cost/Return	Cost/Return	Return	Base	Cost/Return	Cost/Return	Return		
Long-Term Debt	1,783,266,802	44.65%	163,330,233	4.68%	2.09%	7,643.855	163,289,250	4.68%	2.09%	7,641,937	163,289,250	4.68%	2.09%	7.641.937		
Common Equity	2,210,314,602	55.35%	202,470,960	8.55%	4,73%	17,305,244	202,420,156	7.64%	4.23%	15,463,708	202,420,156	9.90%	5.48%	20,039,595		
Total	3,993,581,404	100.00%	365,801,193		6.82%	24,949,099	365,709,406		6,32%	23,105,645	365,709,406		7.57%	27,681,532		